

Symphony of Death

Chapter 13

I watched from the shadows as Anima surrounded Anastasia.

Things proceeded how I wanted.

I heard a rustle, and a figure joined me at my side.

"I did as you told me, Cain, but that doesn't mean—"

"I don't care about your conscience, Hannah," I cut her off. "Don't forget, you have your hand in this, too."

"I'm paying a debt, Cain," Hannah whispered, looking at Anastasia, who was curled up in a little ball, softly whimpering.

"Just because I'm a Blue Blood doesn't mean I agree with everything on both ends. I want no part in this."

"And here I thought you cared for that girl," I taunted.

I could see the nail hit fair and square. "If I could save Anastasia, I would. I don't want her to die. But what does it matter?" Her mouth tightened. "You're going to do whatever you want in the end."

Her fists clenched by her sides. "You really are a despicable—"

Her gasp was cut short when I grabbed her throat, slamming her into the tree.

"Don't act like you're such a saint," I snarled in her face. "You were the one who ratted out Omisha."

I sneered at the horror in her eyes. "Imagine what your kind will do when they find out the truth behind their failures."

That shut her up. I let go of her throat and turned away, staring into the blackened flames dancing on my palms.

A pendant materialized from the flames. Her pendant. The reason she was here. The reason Sharon was summoned.

I couldn't remove it myself. And it had to be gone for me to take the next step.

What'll you do now, Lyra? She utters helplessly in the cage of my hand.

"They'll come after her, you know. The Blue Bloods." Hannah's look was between fear and disdain. "They want your wing. Not just them—many others will come—"

"I want them to come after Anastasia," I said darkly. "Every last one who came after me before."

Hannah looked away, her gaze toward Anastasia, who was still surrounded by Anima. The dark shadows reached out to her.

"You've no idea what I'm planning for her, Hannah." I laughed cruelly. "This is going to be very interesting."

I turned toward the spectacle again.

"That's enough, now," I said with a disinterested tone. A whirlpool of bluish-black flames rose around Anastasia and forced the Anima to shrink back.

I stepped out of the shadows and appeared before her like an impenetrable fortress. I knelt and picked her up. Her body was limp in my arms—she must've passed out from fear.

"I want you to pay the price for your every betrayal with in nite pain and anguish," I told her, and teleported us back to the cottage booked for the shoot.

The pendant was gone, and nothing would stop her from coming to me. I timed the conditions to my advantage, and the outcome was pleasant.

The only other obstacle—Laurel. I had my plans for her.

I looked around the desolated living room. Dark and barren, with only a couch before the fireplace. I could easily take Anastasia back to the hotel, but it would raise questions. Not that I cared; I simply didn't want a mundane headache.

As much as I hated being in the same space with this woman, I had to endure it for the future. I laid her carefully on the couch, the fabric rough beneath her skin, and raised my palm toward the fireplace. Flames burst to life with a warm roar, casting flickering shadows on the cold walls.

"Anastasia!" I patted her cheek, but she didn't budge. She was ice cold, her clothes soaked through. Leaving her like this would kill her.

"You need to change." I removed my jacket and threw it aside along with my tie. I sat next to her and raked my hair.

What was she going to change into?

There was barely anything here, and I couldn't leave her alone for even a second.

Well, to hell with it.

I unbuttoned my shirt and took it off before facing her again.

"Be glad that I'm even considering saving your life."

I cursed under my breath. I didn't want to touch her, didn't want to see her like this.

But necessity never cared about comfort.

I pulled her upright and stripped her down, one trembling limb at a time, before forcing her arms through my shirt and buttoning it up. Her modesty was covered, but the fabric was not warm enough.

Her stillness deepened my frown. I adjusted her in my lap and secured her body in my arms after covering her with my jacket.

The delicate scent of water lilies wafted through the air, soft and fresh, stirring something deep inside me as I grunted softly. I pressed my face into her damp hair and inhaled deeply.

My wing appeared, and I curled it around us. The flame burning in my wing would warm her enough.

A soft sigh escaped her lips when I brushed her hair back from her face and tucked it behind her ear. Her hands curled against my abdomen, and she nuzzled her face into my chest when I caressed her cheek with the back of my hand.

"All this innocence," I murmured against her cheek, basking in her scent.

She was supposed to smell like jasmine. Sharp and unbearable. But she smelled like water lilies. Soft and soothing.

It was different from what I remembered. She bore no resemblance to the past version of herself—but that changed nothing. She would pay for her betrayal.

"Sweet dreams, dear Anastasia," I murmured against her forehead. "Until you wake up to your nightmare."